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By-Hendee, John C.

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In an effort to facilitate recreation studies concerned with the rural-urban variable, this paper presents a summary of theories which might explain rural-urban differences, if any, in outdoor recreation participation. The summary of theories are organized into rural-urban recreation differences based on the influence of (1) size and density of population on man's behavior, and (2) culture on man's actions. The discussion presents the "opportunity theory" which implies that availability of opportunities is the important criterion. Cultural differences are discussed in relation to man's perspective towards the natural environment. Inherent life styles and values also explain some differences. However, all of the theories are cast in general, ambiguous terms which are untestable when conducting a study. Residence on the basis of population density, data on origin of upbringing, controlled variables and population samples, not just samples of recreationists, must be clearly defined when conducting a recreation study. (CM)

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RURAL URBAN DIFFERENCES REFLECTED IN OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION

By

John C. Hendee

Recreation Research Project Leader

Forest Service--PNW Forest Expt. Station

4507 University Way NE, Seattle

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Rapid increase in outdoor recreation participation since World War II has led to huge government investments in recreation facilities and large scale shifts in natural resource use. Interest and concern in this developing trend by affected resource management professions, and most recently by social scientists, has resulted in numerous studies attempting to explain and predict outdoor recreation participation. To date, these research efforts have been largely uncoordinated and applied in nature and have yielded, for the most part, general descriptive findings that offer little in explanation. Rigorous definitive studies of key variables commonly associated with outdoor recreation are needed.

One variable whose inclusion in recreation studies is almost institutional is residence. Several studies suggest that urbanites are disproportionately represented in many forms of outdoor recreation relative to their representation in the national population.[1/] Other authors suggest a rural bias among outdoor recreationists, either generally or for specific activities such as hunting and fishing.[2/] In a recent inventory of behavioral propositions implied in recreation studies Neilsen (1969) identified 86 propositions in 20 articles suggesting rural-urban variation in recreation behavior.

Data from the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission's National Recreation Survey (Study Rpt. 19) presented in Table 1 reflects variation

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1/ Hendee, et al., 1968; ORRRC, 1962; Taves, Hathaway, and Bultena, 1960; Stone and Taves, 1958; McCurdy and Mischon, 1965; King, 1965; Burch and Wenger, 1967; Lucas, 1964; ORRRC, 1962, No. 5, p. 17.

2/ Maddock, Gehrken, and Guthrie, 1965; Bevins, et al., 1968; Etzkorn, 1964; Peterle, 1961, 1967; ORRRC, 1962, No. 6, p. 104; ORRRC, 1962, No. 7, p. 8; Sessoms, 1963; Hauser, 1962.

Table 1.--Participation in specific outdoor recreation activities by rural versus urban residence as reported in the 1960 ORRRC National Recreation Survey.[1]

Activity	Rural Over Represented	Urban Over Represented	Some Variation in Trend	Percent of Population Participating in 1960
Outdoor games and sports		X		30
Bicycling		X		9
Horseback Riding		X		6
Ice Skating	X		X	7
Sledding and Tobogganing		X		9
Snow Skiing		[2]		2
Swimming		X		45
Boating		X	X	22
Water Skiing		X	X	6
Fishing	X			29
Camping	X		X	8
Hiking		X	X	6
Hunting	X			11
Picnicking	[3]	[3]		53
Walking for Pleasure		X		Not Reported
Nature Walks	X	X	X	14
Driving for Pleasure		[4]		52
Sightseeing		X	X	42

[1] Condensed from text, pp. 8-54, in Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission National Recreation Survey, Study Report 19, 394 pp. 1960, illus.

[2] No analysis by residence but presumed to be urban.

[3] Curvilinear relationship from urban--small urban--rural non-farm--rural farm with peaks in use by urban and rural non-farm.

[4] Curvilinear relationship with participation highest in small urban places and lower in large urban and rural areas.

in rural-urban tendencies between activities. This study, the most comprehensive to date, suggests a clear-cut rural bias among only hunters and fishermen. Ice skating, camping and taking nature walks were also common to rural persons but with some conflicting variations across the country.

Mueller and Gurin (1962, p. 11-14) in their ORRRC sponsored study of factors affecting recreation demand summed up the relationship of the rural versus urban residence and outdoor recreation participation as follows:

> ...Since city and country is part of their day-to-day environment one might expect them (urban and rural residents) to differ in the extent to which their recreational patterns involve outdoor activity ..,Of four categories, (1) the cities themselves, (2) the suburban fringe, (3) adjacent areas to a distance of 50 miles, and (4) outlying areas at least 50 miles from a city of 50,000...Suburban areas show somewhat higher participation in outdoor recreation than cities and other areas...However, the relatively high participation by suburbanites is a reflection of their income, education, and occupation...although pronounced differences appear in two or three instances, in general the relationships...tend to be weak, certainly with respect to...age...with the increasing homogeneity of our national culture, many value and interest differences between city and country people are disappearing and decreasing differences in outdoor leisure patterns would seem to be part of this trend.

In subsequent evaluation of the same data, Hauser (1962) clarified, in two diametrically opposed hypotheses, the implications of rural versus urban differences in outdoor recreation participation. They were: 1) "... that as urban population increases, the need for outdoor recreation activities--a return to nature--will increase" and 2) "...that as urbanism as a way of life becomes more widespread there will be a diminution in demand for outdoor recreation." He found some evidence supporting the second hypothesis and concluded that "increasing urbanization may diminish the importance of outdoor recreation activity, in general, and specifically those forms of outdoor recreation restricted to the non-urban environment or which require a great deal of physical vigor and relative discomfort."

The fact that the comprehensive ORRRC studies reveal little and sometimes conflicting variation in outdoor recreation participation by rural versus urban residence calls into question the importance of the rural-urban variable and the validity of numerous small studies reporting rural-urban recreation differences. In addition to other methodological problems, most recreation studies are based on small samples of recreationists from specific sites. Obviously they cannot be generalized to the population at large. Most include little, if any, theoretical speculation as to why urban or rural residence might be associated with outdoor recreation activities. Finally, the relationships between urban versus rural residence and other key variables such as age, education, occupation and income, are rarely analysed simultaneously, yet rural-urban differences may be masking the effects of these other variables.

At this time, one important handicap to recreation studies concerned with the rural-urban variable is the lack of any clear articulation or summary of theories which might explain rural-urban differences in outdoor recreation participation, if they do in fact exist. This paper presents such a summary to facilitate their future testing as alternative propositions. A subsequent important step not attempted here is the systematic matching of these theories against evidence revealed in previous studies.

The following summary of theories are organized into:[3/] 1) Theories of rural-urban recreation differences based on the influence of size and density of population on man's behavior. 2) Theories of rural-urban recreation differences based on the influence of culture on man's actions. This

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[3/] An alternative classification scheme might separate these into (1) those based on rural-urban differences in availability or supply of recreation opportunities and (2) those based on possible rural-urban differences in motivation underlying demand for different types of recreation.

dichotomous classification is, of course, an oversimplification since the two categories cannot actually be severed, but it does incorporate a common criticism that the basis for rural-urban references (Dewey 1960) are often not explicit.

Theories Based on Rural Versus Urban Population Densities

The most obvious rationale for rural-urban recreation differences based on population density is what might be called the "opportunity theory" implying that participation in different forms of outdoor recreation depends on their availability. Since city residents have less opportunity to participate in non-urban leisure activities, they will be under represented in them. But, with ready access to activities available in the city, such as walking for pleasure, they will be over represented. Hauser (1962, p. 48) tested this theory in a variety of ways with national survey data and found substantial support for it.

An interesting implication of the opportunity theory is that, to the extent it is correct, society might control participation by manipulating opportunities to make desired activities available to specific residents. It implies what economists have long maintained is a supply sensitivity of recreation demand, i.e., create opportunities and they will be fulfilled, at least at near zero prices. It also suggests that groups long denied recreation opportunities, not only by virtue of their residence but because of poverty, ignorance or segregation, might become participants in available opportunities if these barriers are removed. However, the latter possibility ignores the fact that recreation opportunity must be consistent with ones values if it is to be exploited. (Mead 1962)

Also related to population density are the purely escapism aspects of outdoor recreation based on man's desire to get away from it all. This is different than the notion put forth by Green (1964) that the recreation

movement is an exodus to the supposedly superior values of the rural past but implied instead that participation in outdoor recreation activities is based on a desire to reduce, temporarily, social contact with others. The argument implies no reciprocal tendency for rural residents to seek more social contact but desire by everyone to escape to reduced levels of extraneous social contact than that normally experienced in their daily lives. Rural residents would thus seek the more isolated activities such as wilderness camping while urban residents might find reduced social contact in car camping, walking, or driving for pleasure.

Theories Based on Rural-Urban Cultural Differences

Burdge (1961) found rural farm residents to be more work-oriented than urban residents (2500 or more persons) in a protestant ethic sense and therefore less positively oriented toward the "frivolity" represented in outdoor recreation activities. He found that farmers participated less in outdoor recreation than did urban residents and had lower scores on a leisure orientation scale. The view of farmers as not only more work oriented but more provincial, traditionally puritanical and conservative is reported in other studies as well (Beers 1953) and could explain many recreation differences. However, the relationship may be masked in many studies where rural residence is not separated into farm and non-farm categories.

The American heritage aspects of outdoor recreation are frequently highlighted in outdoor recreation promotional literature and are institutionalized in such youth programs as the Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls, 4-H clubs and the like, which attempt to promote self reliance, pioneer style. One sociologist, Arnold Green (1964), has articulated the romantic rationale as a national rural bias impelling urbanites to recapture through outdoor recreation an earlier, supposedly superior, set of values in which man fit

into rather than dominated nature.[4] Presumably, such a drive is less pronounced among those already living close to nature in rural environments and one would find them under represented in outdoor recreation. Small town residents would tend to resemble their rural farm neighbors since ecological aspects of the argument suggest that the values promulgated in smaller towns are distinctly more rural than those in urban settings. A prominent underlying theme is man's presumed desire to temporarily escape into the rural past from the artificialities and pressures of modern living felt to be most pronounced in urban settings.

One's perspective towards the natural environment may account for participation in certain outdoor recreation activities and may be accounted for by rural or urban residence. Presumably, an appreciation of nature accompanies participation in most types of outdoor recreation, particularly those environment-oriented activities such as camping, hiking, photography, nature walks, etc. Since rural occupations are typically based on the exploitation and consumption of natural resources, such as farming, mining, and logging, they might encourage an exploitive perspective toward natural resources and thus serve as a retarding influence on outdoor recreation (Hendee 1969). The view that nature is to be used, not just appreciated, characterizes such a utilitarian perspective. Urban occupations, on the other hand, are typically in manufacturing or service industries far removed from the natural environment and, although not a necessary or sufficient condition, urban residence may thus allow the development of appreciative attitudes towards nature. A utilitarian attitude toward nature may thus

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[4] A recent national Gallup survey revealed that a majority of Americans now living in urban areas would like to live in small towns or rural areas (Nat. Wildlife Fed. 1969).

be associated with "harvesting" recreational activities--fishing, hunting, etc,--whereas an appreciative orientation is more closely linked to the realization of aesthetic and social values in outdoor activities. One asset of the theory is that it incorporates occupational differences between city and country, reportedly a fundamental criterion in rural-urban comparisons (Schnore, 1966).

Another plausible theory is that certain outdoor recreation activities are inherent in the life styles and values promulgated by rural versus urban residence. Hunting provides an interesting activity with which to consider this explanation. While most outdoor recreational activities are evidencing rapid growth, participation in hunting is diminishing. Studies also reveal that in contrast to most other outdoor recreational activities, hunting appeals to rural residents and blue collar workers. It could be argued that this is a function of differential rates of socialization into this activity in urban and rural places. The values reflected in hunting may have been most pervasive in the rural population, but are being diminished as rural young adults who have been interested in hunting migrate to urban places and find a less supportive set of reference groups for this activity, and as intra-generational social mobility introduces them to new sets of values deemed more appropriate to their social status.

The foregoing notions of rural urban differences in outdoor recreation seem related in some respects to the "familiarity," "new experience," and the "pleasant childhood memory" theories recently elaborated by Burch and Wenger (1967).

The familiarity theory suggests that people seek leisure experiences which are similar to their every day lives. This implies that urban residents would be under represented among outdoor recreationists, and particularly in

primitive types of recreation representing the most extreme contrast with urban life. Rural residents, on the other hand, would be over represented in outdoor recreation participation, and perhaps most significantly in hunting, fishing, and more challenging types of camping.[5/]

The "new experience" theory suggests that people seek leisure experiences which allow them to escape their everyday lives via sharply contrasting and new experiences. This suggests that rural residents would be under represented among outdoor recreationists since they would tend to escape to city activities. Urban residents, on the other hand, would seek to escape to the country during their leisure time activity to participate in rural-located outdoor recreation activities.

Burch and Wenger found neither the "familiarity" or "new experience" theories substantiated in a study of Oregon campers. They suggested instead that "activities" pleasantly familiar during childhood tend to attract one's leisure time attention as an adult. This "pleasant childhood memory" theory was substantiated by their data which indicated childhood camping and hiking experience and adult styles of camping were highly related. Several other studies suggest similar findings and this theoretical framework may be one of the most promising.[6/]

[5/] Burdge relates the familiarity notion to occupation and suggests that people tend to do in leisure what they do in work. Burdge, Rabel J. Occupational Influences on the Use of Outdoor Recreation. Unpublished doctoral dissertation on file, Penn State Univ., Univ. Park, Pennsylvania, 1965. See also Burdge, Rabel J. Occupational Differences in Leisure Orientation, Unpublished paper presented to the Rural Sociological Society, August, 1967, San Francisco.

[6/] About 70 percent of 1300 wilderness users in the Pacific Northwest reported taking their first trip before they were 15 years old (Hendee et al. 1968). A study of hunters in the Northeast reported childhood participation to be a primary factor in participation (Bevins et al. 1968).

A final theory of recreation participation based on rural-urban cultural differences may be related to the reported tendency of urbanism as a way of life to lead to the development of certain characteristics (Wirth 1938). For example, Simmel (1950) suggests that urban living tends to induce an incapacity to react with appropriate energy to new stimulations. Change and variety fail to arouse significant response and the child reared in the city is said to develop a blase attitude in comparison with children reared in more tranquil surroundings. This "protection against the deleterious effects of the overintensified, nervous stimulation...of megalopolís" was referred to by Winthrop (1968, p. 311) as "part of the pathology of metropolitan life." It might thus be inferred that urbanites, being more blase than their rural counterparts, would be less adventurous and capable of reaping benefits from the rigors and challenge of outdoor recreation activities. Or they might reflect such an attitude in the selection of only certain types of activities or in some characteristic manner of approaching the outdoor recreation experience (Catton, Hendee, Steinburn 1967). An example is car camping with excessive paraphenalia, a frequent but incongruous site in many campgrounds and grequently attributed to overcivilized campers.

Methodological Problems

There are several alternate theories to explain rural-urban recreation differences but almost all are cast in such general and ambiguous terms that mobilizing operational data capable of testing them is an imposing task. Most outdoor recreation studies seem to have attached little importance to this methodological problem and a few elementary suggestions seem in order.

First of all, studies should be designed so it is possible to classify residence on the basis of local population density, i.e., whether the location is part of an urban wheel and whether it is central city, suburb, small town, market community, farm or rural non farm. Standard census classifications

may not be adequate. Second, data on origin of upbringing is necessary to test cultural explanations for rural-urban recreation differences. And, as Hauser (1962) points out, the most important data may be that reflecting the generation of rural or urban residence and the extent to which respondents have been "exposed to non-urban traditional patterns of living--in their contacts with family, church, school and fellow man in general." Third, it is important that other variables, such as age, occupation, income, and education be controlled for in the analysis to determine what variance in the data might be due to other variables. Finally, population samples, not just samples of recreationists, are necessary to prevent improper generalizations to the population at large, a notorious practice in many recreation studies.

The foregoing methodological comments are quite basic and may appear obvious to some. But, no recreation study has yet satisfied all their criteria and most studies fall embarrassingly short.

Summary and Conclusions

There are multiple theories that may explain rural-urban differences in recreation participation. Several have been elaborated in this paper. However, all of the theories are cast in general, ambiguous terms and will be difficult to test. Many methodological problems must be overcome and the traditional lack of rigor, characteristic of recreation studies, eliminated.

However, more fruitful avenues of inquiry than rural-urban differences may be available to recreation researchers. National surveys, such as conducted by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission, reveal a surprising uniformity in participation patterns of residential groups for many recreation activities. When differences have been found, they were small when compared to other demographic variables such as age, socioeconomic status, etc. This lack of rural-urban recreation differences suggests that theories may be more appropriately built around demographic factors other than residence.

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